Today’s featured poet is Martin Steingesser, Portland’s former poet laureate. His ecstatic poem celebrates a morning on the road, paying tribute along the way to two American poets noted for their own ecstatic celebrations.

Today, the Traffic Signals
All Changed for Me

*by Martin Steingesser*

It’s all language, I am thinking on my way over the drawbridge to South Portland, driving into a wishbone blue, autumn sky, maple red, aspen yellow—oaks, evergreens stretching out in sunlight. Isn’t this all message and sign, singing to us? When I open ears, listen with eyes wide open, the world tumbles in, suddenly a rush through my body, how tires zummmmm across a bridge grating, sending vibratos along limbs, out fingers and toes. Even these dead things we make: cement walkways, macadam streets, all our brick and steel and rubber, even these are alive. Sometimes I feel so empty. Today, I am filling up, the way this Indian Summer morning keeps fattening on sunlight, feelings, words frothing like yeast. Blue sky rises in my blood, geese and monarchs migrating through; my love’s an open field, meadows of goldfinch, Anne’s lace, new moon and crow laughing…Tornadoes collapse in a breath, oceans curl at my toes, galaxies exploding in my heart. Am I going loco? I pull over onto the roadside, cars and trucks whizzing by. I can’t get places I thought I was going. I think of old Walt, quadrupeds and birds stucco’d all over. Why not? And you, too, Allen, gay, locomotive sunflower laureate, both of you, among the leaves, in your all-star colors, hitting all the curves, belting poems out of the century. O look!—this is what’s happening.